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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001482

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/12/2017
TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY: PRESSURE MOUNTING FOR MILITARY TO ACT
AGAINST PKK IN IRAQ

REF: A. ANKARA 1449

[1](#)B. ANKARA 1352

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Ross Wilson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: PM Erdogan called for a special security meeting today to discuss the latest PKK attacks and Turkey's response. Press reports characterize the meeting as an opportunity to get interagency consensus on the way forward to combat the PKK and pave the way for a possible decision at the June 20 NSC meeting. Casualties from PKK attacks, which have spread as far north as Erzincan, continue to rise. Visuals of grieving relatives at the funerals of military soldiers are again dominating the media, with some turning their outrage against the government, possibly encouraged by the TGS website notice to the Turkish public to stand up against terrorism (ref a). The military and government continue to trade accusations about who is responsible for calling a cross-border operation (CBO) but the pressure is mounting for action. END SUMMARY.

CASUALTIES CONTINUE TO MOUNT

[1](#)2. (SBU) PKK violence against Turkish security forces and interests continues unabated. In just the past five days, 9 soldiers died and 10 were wounded in attacks in Diyarbakir, Siirt, Sirnak and Erzincan provinces. Erzincan, located in northeastern Turkey, is the furthest from the Iraq border. One Turkish terrorism expert suggested to the press that this attack may be intended to send the message that the PKK is capable of carrying out attacks far from its main bases in northern Iraq. Official GOT statistics indicate that 49 Turkish security forces and at least 13 civilians have died in PKK-related violence so far in 2007, with nearly all those casualties sustained between April and June. For the first time, two military officers, a Lieutenant Colonel and a Major, were killed in PKK attacks. A June 10 bombing in Istanbul wounded 14, though it has not been confirmed that this was a PKK attack.

FUNERALS SHOWCASE PUBLIC OUTRAGE

[1](#)3. (C) Whipped up by recent political statements by government and military officials and relentless media coverage of PKK casualties, the public has begun to lash out at the government for failing to respond forcefully to the terrorist violence. In Sirnak, on June 10, over 20,000 people joined a 4.5 hour march against terrorism. The June

11 funeral for a Turkish military officer in Ankara turned into an anti-government protest, with the crowd calling for the AKP government to resign. The victim's family refused to shake hands with FM Gul, Deputy PM Sahin and other government ministers paying their respects. Only Deputy PM Sener, who decided against running in the July 22 general elections, was received. MFA officials subsequently told us that a visibly upset Gul summoned senior staff to an emergency meeting at his residence that same day to again review what the government could do to ameliorate the PKK threat. At the funeral for a Lieutenant Colonel in Manisa, also on June 11, Parliamentary Speaker Bulent Arinc was booed from the podium by a crowd of 20,000 protesting Arinc and the AKP government.

These protests follow closely on the heels of the June 7 TGS website statement exhorting the Turkish people to "oppose and resist en masse" terrorist acts. PM Following a June 11 cabinet meeting, DPM Sener stressed that the government is pursuing joint efforts against terrorism and urged the public not to exploit funerals for political purposes. Erdogan called the anti-government protests at the funerals "separatist statements" designed to create "disunity and separation" within Turkey.

GOVERNMENT ON THE DEFENSIVE

14. (C) Defending the government's stance against the PKK, FM Gul denied any lack of coordination with the military on the issue of Iraq and claimed to have held "secret" talks with Chief of Staff GEN Buyukanit immediately following the TGS announcement that Turkish troops had been harassed by Peshmerga in northern Iraq (ref b) to discuss possible actions. According to Gul, the government had backed Buyukanit's subsequent statement that Turkey would respond forcefully to this incident. An article in the pr-government

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daily Yeni Safak said that the government had given the green light to a specific CBO action plan in December 2006. However, Land Forces Commander GEN Basbug maintained to us on June 11 that TGS does not have the authority to conduct a CBO because the government has not yet secured a blanket authority from parliament.

15. (C) To demonstrate the government's leadership on the PKK issue, PM Erdogan on June 11 called a meeting of select government officials (Erdogan, Gul, Buyukanit, Basbug, Jandarma Commander Kosaner) for June 12 to discuss security issues. Coming one week before the regularly-scheduled NSC meeting, the press has billed this as an opportunity for the government and military to come to a consensus on how to address the PKK terrorist threat and possibly to pave the way for a government decision at the June 20 NSC meeting.

16. (C) COMMENT: The military maintains to us that not only does it not have authorization for a CBO, it does not have a plan to conduct one in the coming weeks. Deputy Chief of Staff GEN Saygun pointedly told us that he plans to go on vacation on June 20. In the meantime, however, we expect TGS to keep the pressure on with additional public statements and actions such as a proposed (but unscheduled) media tour of the southeast. While circumstances could dictate a cross-border action in the near term, it is likely that the government statements and meetings are a defensive response to TGS pressure, intended as a show of leadership in advance of the July 22 general elections. END COMMENT.

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